Columbia River Treaty 2014-2024 Review
Ecosystem Representatives Dialogue
August 3, 2011; 1:00 p.m.-3:00 p.m.
Portland, Oregon

Summary of Dialogue

SRT Members in Attendance:

Taylor Aalvik, Cowlitz Indian Tribe
Mark Bagdovitz, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Jim Barton for Wit Anderson, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Rick Pendergrass for Steve Oliver, Bonneville Power Administration
Mary Lou Soscia, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Jim Heffernan, Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission
Rick Kruger, State of Oregon
Tom Karier, State of Washington

STT Members and Others

Jack Camp, USACE
Rob Lothrop, CRITFC
Rick Mogren, Federal Caucus
John Marsh, CSKT
Allison O'Brien, Department of the Interior
Bill Proctor, USACE
Matt Rhea, USACE
Rick Rolf, BPA

Ecosystem Panelists

Bobby Cochran, Willamette Partnership
Tori Guerrini, Willamette Partnership
Liz Hamilton, Executive Director, Northwest Sports Fishing Association
Tom Iverson, Columbia Basin Fish & Wildlife Authority
Brett Swift, NW Regional Director of American Rivers
Aaron Wolf, Oregon State University

Welcome and Overview

Rick Pendergrass and Jim Barton welcomed everyone to the meetings, and reviewed the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) ground rules for this type of a meeting with the Sovereign Review Team. One of the ground rules was that the Sovereign Review Team was not looking for consensus on the topics at hand; just individual opinions from panel members.

Dialogue with Ecosystem Function Representatives

Panel members introduced themselves and their organizations, and highlighted some of their issues of primary importance:

Liz Hamilton, Executive Director, Northwest Sport Fishing Association (NSIA). The Association represents those who are working in the sports fishing industry throughout the Pacific Northwest. The Columbia River is the largest, and most critical driver for, the fisheries in the Pacific Northwest. Treaty Review represents an opportunity to build a legacy of fisheries protection. Liz asked about the representation of ecosystem interests in the Treaty Review process. *If BPA and the Corps are the only two entities taking the lead, then we are missing the third leg of our three-legged stool. Power and flood control organizations cannot adequately represent ecosystem interests. I suggest that the Department of the Interior or U.S. Fish & Wildlife be the third part of the negotiation team, with authority to speak for ecosystem services. What standing do the tribes and states have in this process?*

Tom Iverson, Columbia Basin Fish and Wildlife Authority. The Authority was established in 1987 to provide one voice for fish and wildlife managers. It was used to develop and prioritize habitat protection projects; many of those projects are now underway. The Columbia River Treaty is very important to fish and wildlife managers, and they are highly interested in the Treaty Review process. Tom wanted all to know that the views he was presenting at this meeting were his own, and not representative of the members of the Authority.

Tom noted that the Columbia River is now a series of reservoirs, and that we manage migrating fish in an unnatural habitat. Normally, reservoir fisheries are managed for non-migrating resident fish. The interaction of these two different fisheries management models need to be considered.

Tom highlighted three key principles for fisheries/habitat management, and urged SRT members to factor all of them into the ecosystem modeling and analysis: 1) **Sediment transport** – a primary function of a river is moving sediment downhill. That natural movement creates habitat for fish and wildlife. 2) **Temperature transport** – the river also serves an important role in temperature regulation; you have to consider the temperature effects in model simulations. 3) **Nutrient flow** – bugs feed fish, fish feed wildlife, wildlife and fish die and decompose -- which feeds the bugs. Healthy rivers have healthy flora and fauna.

Aaron Wolf, Chair of Geosciences, Oregon State University. OSU maintains a water conflict management program that encompasses some 640 water treaties from throughout the world. *We are interested in how people are managing this around the world. What are the factors for success? How is water quality addressed in these treaties? What about political boundaries?* On the Columbia River Treaty Review, OSU is working with six universities from throughout the region, including Canadian universities.

The three biggest changes that have occurred since 1964 include the role of the tribes, a greater societal awareness of the ecosystem, and public involvement. There is a push, now, toward managing the river in a more natural regime. For years, the Treaty has kept the river functioning really well for power and flood control. *We've heard a real desire to have a collaborative process between*

Canada and the United States. A key question: how far can we get with a Pacific Northwest discussion -- how can we keep this as local, and informal, as possible?

Aaron thanked SRT members for inviting the panelists to engage in a discussion, and urged the sovereigns to maintain communication throughout the Treaty Review process.

Bobby Cochran, Willamette Partnership. The Partnership was created several years ago. *Our goal is to invest money in ways that make a true difference to the ecosystem*. Bobby explained that a key goal for the Partnership is to find solutions for ways to achieve and maintain fish-friendly water temperatures, and that the partnership cares about protecting and enhancing all ecosystem functions, including clean water, healthy habitats, and natural places to play. In 2009 the Partnership expanded to work on projects throughout the Pacific Northwest. *It is critical that ecosystem function is included in the Treaty Review.*

We should be thinking about a broad array of potential land use changes, and we need to be thinking about all of the tributaries, not just the main stem of the Columbia. And, we need to work on a direct link between science and public policy.

Brett Swift, NW Regional Director of American Rivers. American Rivers was established in 1973; the Pacific Northwest office was established in 1992 to protect salmon and steelhead. We have focused much of our efforts in the past on the Snake and Columbia Rivers; lately we have been working in the Yakima and Deschutes river systems.

This is a great opportunity to improve management of the ecosystem of the river. *We are happy to be here talking to you about this, and believe it's valuable for the U.S. Entity to be engaging with us. We are looking for improvements in water quantity and quality; in improvements that benefit the native species of our region.*

Brett noted that her organization would be very interested in the Treaty Review modeling. She also urged the SRT to conduct a fully transparent process; clearly defining the roles of the various stakeholders and providing people with access to the models and alternatives. She urged the SRT to give ecosystem function equal weight in the process – *I hope that ecosystem alternatives aren't based on what is left over after meeting other purposes.*

Brett also noted that it was important to maintain a robust dialogue between all of the stakeholders.

Sovereign representatives had a number of questions for the panelists:

Q: You mentioned the 600 treaties that you have reviewed – do you know about any treaties with extensive ecosystem issues that have recently been renegotiated? (Soscia)
A: We could pull the results for all of the treaties that meet that criteria. In the Egypt/Sudan – that process began with two countries and expanded to 11 countries, and there were a number of ecosystem issues incorporated into that process. Models are designed by scientists and engineers – the trick is: what is the least amount of information we need to make a political decision? Can we collaboratively build a model that perhaps isn't 100% biologically accurate,

but allows us to have a conversation about the pros and cons of river functions? What do we really need for decision making? There is a strong recognition about the rights of indigenous populations and the enhancement and protection of the ecosystem. How do we manage the system as a whole? (Wolf)

Q: Is there a sub-basin plan or its equivalent for the Columbia Basin estuaries? Do the sub-basin plans speak to an ecosystem approach? (Lothrop)
A: Yes, the Northwest Power and Conservation Council did develop an estuary sub-basin plan. But most of the sub-basin plans don't take an ecosystem approach, they have been developed to address ecosystem issues on a species-by-species basis. (Iverson)

Q: There were very high water flows on the Columbia this year; 500 kcfs for almost two months. How did these flows rate from an ecosystem perspective? (Pendergrass)
A: They were fabulous. We've asked for an analysis of the fish passage this year. We wanted to compare it to what we saw in '98 and '99 after the high water levels in 1996. There were huge runs of Chinook salmon in those years, and the industry is salivating over the possibility of high fish returns in a couple of years. High flow events are a great thing for fish. (Hamilton, Iverson)

Q: As we are hearing from you today, and have heard before – there are tremendous resources out there that can help the sovereigns as we work to develop our recommendation. But how do we make sure we are taking advantage of all of those resources; for example, how do we plug into the wealth of knowledge of the University Consortium? (Aalvik)
A: We're happy to help. There are six universities ready on standby to help in any way you need. It's important that we maintain our relationship and that we keep the conversation as informal as possible. (Wolf)

Q: Given the limited time we have to work toward a recommendation, what is the right set of metrics as we try to measure ecosystem function? What should we focus on? What should our priorities be? (Rea, Pendergrass)
A: There is a great deal of overlap between flood risk reduction and ecosystem function. The restoration of flood plain function could benefit ecosystem function. You should understand and integrate the two. An in-depth analysis of the possibility of reclaiming floodplain function would be good. This will keep more water out of The Dalles, and will require less storage from Canada. This might be cheaper than trying to manage to a 100-year flood event. (Swift, Iverson)

You need to make it clear how you are modeling for increased wind energy production. Also, will you be modeling for different 100-year events? We might want to redefine that title, given what we have experience over the last decade. There are temperature standards that are the law; those have to be used as metrics. The modeling should be carried out in a way that meets these temperature standards. (Hamilton)

If you make sure ecological systems are functioning as they should, then the biology will follow; hence, sediment, temperature, and nutrient transport mentioned earlier. If you meet water quality needs, the species will follow. Salmon is an iconic species, but other species have local importance and significance. I also mentioned reservoir management earlier, which relates to upper river fisheries management. You have to define the environmental factors you need in time and space in order for each species to thrive. (Iverson)

Q: We've thought about some ecosystem modeling related to flow, temperature, other key parameters. What type and how much information would you like to see? What information do you and your constituents believe is most important to the U.S. in making a decision relative to the future of the Treaty? (Pendergrass)
A: Bob Lackey is an important resource with his Salmon 2100 project; his book on the future of salmon includes chapters on climate change. The University of Washington has also conducted similar studies on climate change effects on the Columbia River environment. It's important to optimize the opportunities and not try to engineer an artificial environment within a basin that is changing drastically and very rapidly. (Iverson)

Make sure you have public briefings from time to time, so we can see what you are working on. (Hamilton)

When California wanted to buy water from Canada, they did so as part of NAFTA. Couldn't we take the same approach here – that is, identify and work with the environmental obligations under NAFTA? We might have some resource material to help with that. (Wolf)

The three legs of the stool need to be given equal weight: power, flood control, ecosystem health. The Northwest Power Act, ESA, and the Clean Water Act were not in place when the Treaty was signed. Now they are, and they need to be taken into account. (Iverson)

Q: Aaron, regarding your Nile experience; you mentioned that some decision-making doesn't need to be as precise as one would think. Not everything needs to be modeled to death when you have a collaborative process. Any thoughts on how we can sort out what needs to be studied and what doesn't? (Rolf)
A: There needs to be a balance between the degree of model sophistication and the time you have available to study it. The Treaty Review process is currently moving as fast as it can. Within the university community, we have discussed a couple of things we think could be handled conceptually. For example, the idea of returning fish to Canada. You don't need a detailed model to determine, conceptually, what that would require. (Wolf)

Sovereign representatives also answered Liz Hamilton's questions about equal weight and ecosystem representation in the Treaty Review process:

BPA and the Corps of Engineers – also known as the U.S. Entity – implement the Treaty. Because of that role we have established this consultation process. We have said that power, flood control and ecosystem are our primary driving purposes. But we are also looking at impacts on other areas, for example, recreation and navigation. (Barton)

The ultimate goal is to make a consensus-based recommendation to the U.S. State Department. We are really working to achieve consensus. (Pendergrass)

Be assured that the Department of the Interior is heavily involved. We want to make sure we are doing everything possible to maximize the protection of the ecosystem, and, at the same time, are being mindful of the flood control and power benefits we get from the Treaty. (O'Brian)

The review is conducted by the U.S. Entity because the review process is integrated into the Treaty itself. It's our goal to make sure ecosystem function is fully integrated into the Treaty. (Heffernan)

Liz Hamilton responded: *Quite frankly, I have experience in other forums when BPA/Corps have taken the lead and it was more like muzzling than truly listening and integrating our perspective. Your agencies are experts in power and flood control, but you are not ecosystem experts. Whether it comes from the Tribes or the Department of the Interior, this process needs the representation from all three in order to be truly meaningful.*

The sovereign representatives present emphasized that there will be continued opportunities for dialogue and engagement throughout the Treaty Review process. Panelists thanked the sovereigns for the opportunity to speak together, and said they would continue to be engaged.